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SOUTHEAST ASIA: #1--SOUTH VIETNAM

I South Vietnam remains firmly committed to the West, and is increasingly concerned over what President Diem calls the "rampant" growth of neutralism in Asia.

A The Vietnamese are keenly aware that the emergence of a hostile regime in Laos would--in combination with an inimical Cambodia and a Communist North Vietnam--complete South Vietnam's physical isolation from friendly territory.

B. The Diem government also fears that a "settlement" in Laos will

weaken present British and Indian tacit acceptance of South Vietnam's own anti-Geneva stand.

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1. Both the UK and India tend to connect a north-south settlement in Vietnam with Communist willingness to come to terms.

II South Vietnam is therefore taking steps to protect its position.

A An envoy has been despatched to Laos, to counterbalance any Communist diplomatic representation there that may be established following Premier Souvanna's Peiping trip.

B Also, Saigon's quasi-official "representative" in Cambodia is instructed to combat Communist intrigue in the event Vietnamese diplomats show up there.

C The South Vietnamese have emphasized to Prime Minister Nehru that Indian interests in Indochina are best served by keeping South Vietnam independent.

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Meanwhile, Diem is continuing efforts to shore up South Vietnam's internal defenses against communist subversion, and constant military and police pressure is being maintained on Viet Minh cadres.